U.S. Reported Suppressing 1945 Hiroshima Films

Associated Press

The United States has suppressed for nearly 22 years confiscated Japanese films showing ghastly after-effects of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, American officials revealed yesterday.

The Japanese Government has at least twice asked that restrictions on the film be lifted, but the U.S. Government has refused on grounds it might damage U.S.-Japanese relations, the informants said.

Called in Japan "The film of illusion" because it wasn't supposed to exist, the film was taken by Tokyo University scientists rushed to Hiroshima soon after the bombing, the source said.

The officials, who declined identification, said the Japanese scientists still were at work filming in the devasted city when U.S. officials arrived in Hiroshima and confiscated the film.

But the American authorities were determined to finish the documentary and used the same Japanese professional cameramen who had taken the initial footage.

For many years, officials said, U.S. policy flatly opposed any distribution of the documentary because it showed in stark and gruesome detail blast effects and the bomb's impact in a densely populated area. It is also considered part of the military's secret strategic bombing studies.

But some U.S. authorities reportedly now favor letting Japan decide what if any restrictions should be imposed on the film's showing. This appeared to leave the door open for reconsideration if Japan should renew its request for the documentary.

The U.S. Government has estimated that between 70,000 and 80,000 persons were killed in the bombing of Hiroshima.